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REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF
SUBSIDIARY BODIES: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 11 July 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

It was with great surprise that we noted that the Economic and Social Council allowed the circulation (under agenda item 7 (d) of the substantive session) of a letter by the Permanent Representative of Turkey, with enclosures from an illegal secessionist entity. The so-called "TRNC" has been condemned by the United Nations and is not recognized by any country, except Turkey, in defiance of Security Council resolutions and in particular Council resolution 550 (1984), which calls upon all States and international organizations "not to facilitate or in any way assist the aforesaid secessionist entity".

The well-known Turkish propaganda has long been discredited.

I would like, however, to remind that the Security Council by its resolution 1092 (1996) deplored the brutal killings of Greek Cypriots last year pointing out "in particular the unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by the Turkish/Turkish Cypriot side".

Unfortunately, almost a year after these crimes, no investigation has been conducted by the Turkish side and no one was brought to justice. On the contrary, one of the main suspected perpetrators has been elevated into so-called "Minister of Agriculture" of the pseudostate, while the collaboration with extremist organizations like the Grey Wolves (involved, inter alia, in the attempt against the Pope) is further consolidated.

The Turkish disregard for the norms and rules of international law is also evidenced by the change of the geographical names of our towns and villages in the occupied part of Cyprus. The use of Turkish names is just another attempt for the Turkification of the occupied territory.

Concerning the allegations about the purchase of weapons by the Republic of Cyprus, I would like to point out that this is necessitated by the continuing Turkish military occupation of part of our territory, the presence of 35,000 Turkish soldiers and the constant upgrading of their equipment and hardware. It is for this reason that the Secretary-General, in a series of reports to the Security Council, underlined that the occupied part of Cyprus remains one of the most militarized areas in the world (see S/1996/411 of 7 June 1996).

The Government of Cyprus does not believe in a military solution that will have disastrous consequences for all Cypriots, Greeks and Turks alike.

In this sense, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Glafcos Clerides, put forward in December 1993 a proposal for the demilitarization of Cyprus. This proposal provides for the disbanding of the Cyprus National Guard, the handing over of its weapons and equipment to UNFICYP, the maintenance of a police force at its present numerical strength, armed only with light weapons, the establishment of a fund, under the United Nations, from savings thus effected to be used for the needs of the whole population of the island after the solution of the problem. In return, the proposal provides for the withdrawal of the Turkish occupation troops and the disbanding of the Turkish Cypriot armed forces. It also envisages the stationing of a multinational force, in which both Turkey and Greece could participate, which will have the mandate, under a Security Council resolution, to intervene in case of breaches of peace or suspicions for the creation of paramilitary forces in the island and in order to guarantee the agreement.

This proposal is still on the table and we honestly believe that it represents a genuine answer to the security concerns of all Cypriots. Its implementation will also lead to stability in our sensitive region.

Regarding the treatment of the Turkish Cypriots living in the government-controlled areas of the Republic, the very fact that they chose to escape from the "paradise" the occupation forces created for them in order to live with their Greek Cypriot compatriots speaks for itself. Consequently, any attempt to contest the report of the Secretary-General stating that the Turkish Cypriots "are accorded the same legal rights and privileges as Greek Cypriots" is, to say the least, ludicrous.

It is obvious that the Turkish selective quotations are intended to divert attention from the continuous violations of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Cyprus by Turkey and, in particular, of the few Greek Cypriots and Maronites living in the occupied territory. The Secretary-General stated in his report to the Commission on Human Rights that "these communities were the object of very severe restrictions, which curtail the exercise of many basic freedoms and have the effect of ensuring that, inexorably with the passage of time, those communities will cease to exist in the northern part of the island" (see E/CN.4/1996/54, para. 14).

One glaring example of the Turkish atrocities against the enclaved persons is the well-known ordeal of a Greek Cypriot teacher, Mrs. Eleni Foka, who has been the victim of continuous harassment and intimidation. Mrs. Foka has been recently physically attacked by agents of the occupation regime and she is still prevented from returning to her home in the occupied Karpass peninsula. Her crime was that she refused to sign an "identity card" of the illegal regime. Consequently, one of the three schools for the few remaining Greek Cypriot pupils in the Turkish occupied areas has been without a teacher since last September in flagrant violation of the Vienna III agreement of 1975 on the living conditions of the enclaved persons.

It is worth mentioning that the Rapporteur of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, the late Lord Finsberg, after he had visited the enclaved persons stated that he was "shocked" by the living conditions of those persons, who "suffer gross abuses of human rights". The same view is shared by the current Rapporteur, Mr. Barsoni.

The cultural and religious heritage of the people of Cyprus has not escaped the destructive mania of the occupation regime. Archaeological sites and places of worship are being systematically destroyed, profaned and looted. Religious objects are sold on the international black market.

On the contrary, the Cyprus Government maintains and repairs mosques in the free areas, as it considers them to be part of the island's heritage. Many of the mosques in the free areas of Cyprus operate for the religious needs of the Turkish Cypriots as well as for the many Muslims who visit or reside in Cyprus.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General, in his report (S/1997/437 of 5 June 1997), stated that on 19 April 1997, 437 Turkish Cypriots were able to make a pilgrimage to the Hala Sultan Tekke mosque in Larnaca without any restrictions imposed by the Government. Unfortunately, he continues, a reciprocal pilgrimage to the church of Apostolos Andreas by 600 Greek Cypriots, scheduled for Orthodox Easter on 27 April, was cancelled at the last moment, as a result of the insistence of the illegal regime to exclude a number of persons.

It is indeed regrettable that Turkey chose to unleash a propaganda campaign at this very delicate moment when the Secretary-General and the international community are exerting efforts towards finding a just and viable solution of the Cyprus problem. The Cyprus Government is not interested in this kind of polemics. We are sincerely committed to work hard for building a common, happy and prosperous future for all the citizens for our Republic. We call on Turkey to facilitate the long-overdue solution of the Cyprus problem.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council, under agenda item 7 (d).

(Signed): Sotos Zackheos
Ambassador, Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Cyprus